



## Communist University Introductions

*These texts may be used as “openings to discussion” of the original reading texts that are supplied by the CU. They are not intended to be authoritative or conclusive. They are contributions to discussion like any other such contributions. The introductions are not a substitute for the reading texts.*

*This is the first of two booklets containing introductions to the CU “Development” course.*

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### Development, Part 0



## Development Is Ours

*Introduction to a 10-part Course: “Development, Rural and Urban”*

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## Some Relevant Quotations on “Development”

*The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles.*

**Marx/Engels, Communist Manifesto, 1848**

*Communism = Soviet Power + Electrification*

**V I Lenin, 1921**

*What we want is to combine in our process of inquiry the action of the forms of thought with a criticism of them. The forms of thought must be studied in their essential nature and complete **development**: they are at once the object of research and the action of that object. This is **Dialectic**, instead of being brought to bear upon the categories from without, it is immanent in their own action.*

**G W F Hegel, Shorter Logic (1830)**

*“When I use a word, Humpty Dumpty said, in rather a scornful tone, it means just what I choose it to mean, neither more nor less.”*

*“The question is,” said Alice, “whether you can make words mean so many different things.”*

*“The question is,” said Humpty Dumpty, “which is to be master, that’s all.”*

**Lewis Carroll, Through the Looking-Glass, 1871**

*“The free development of each is the condition for the free development of all”*

**Marx/Engels, Communist Manifesto, 1848**

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## Development

“Development”, like many other powerful words, including “Freedom” and “Democracy”, had a meaning in revolutionary philosophy long before it had a vulgar bourgeois economists’ meaning.

Part of the purpose of our studies is therefore always, and with deliberation, to reclaim the political language that our revolutionary predecessors pioneered and left to us, and to take it back from the bourgeois demagogues who constantly try to steal it.

Development is the interior unfolding of a unitary phenomenon or system, propelled by the struggle of opposites within it. Development is the essence of dialectics. It is dialectics in motion. It is the essence of change. This revolutionary meaning of the word “development” is the only one that has a clear definition and an intentional purpose. It means the development of people.

The vulgar economists' definition of the word "development" is a vague gesture in the direction of more infrastructure, lowering the cost of doing business, a higher GDP, and other such "indicators" or presumed generally-beneficial goods expediently selected to suit the occasion. In this definition, it is about things.

On grander occasions, the brandished indicators may be an internationally-endorsed set of arbitrary "development goals", which, though globally celebrated, nevertheless fail to rise above the *ad hoc* and the eclectic, because they continue to evade the dialectical meaning of "development".

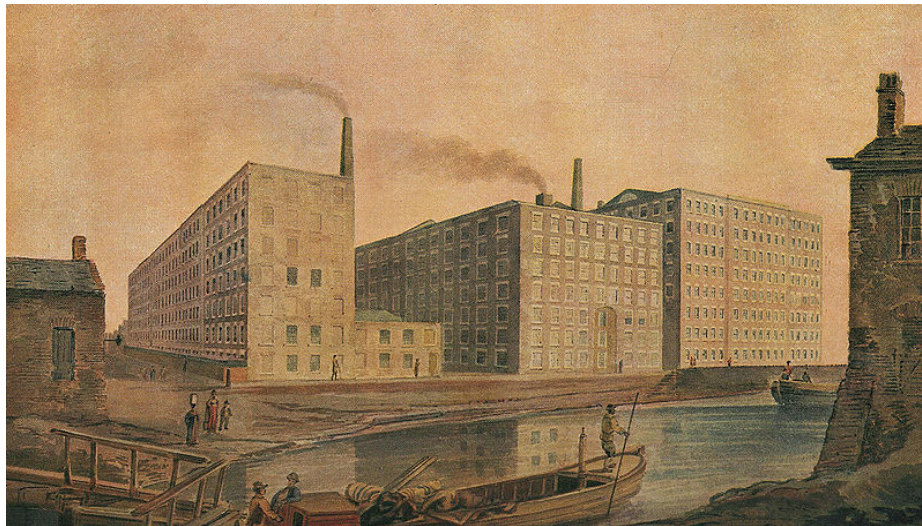
The obfuscation of "development", like our attempts to clarify it, is deliberate. This is because in actual human society, development is class struggle, with winners and losers. There is no such thing as a "win-win" class struggle. There is no such thing as a "tide that lifts all the boats". Some of the boats are tied to the bottom.

Bourgeois economists, and Imperialism generally, although it has manifestly failed worldwide to employ even half of the people and to provide for them adequately, are obliged to pretend that there can be such a thing as generally-beneficial development that does not challenge the capitalist system.

Hence they have stolen our word and hidden its true meaning, in an attempt to deceive us. We must take it back.

The picture is [Filonov](#)'s representation of Lenin and the ground-breaking "[GOELRO](#)" plan that included the electrification of the Soviet Union.

- To download the full Development, Rural and Urban course in PDF files, [please click here](#)
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# Urban from Rural

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To begin this course, we note that:

- The National Democratic Revolution (NDR) is a class alliance. It is a unity-in-action for the extension of democracy to the outer limits of the nation and to all conceivable mass constituencies. It is the pre-requisite for further political progress thereafter.
  - [Kwame Nkrumah](#) wrote: *“Seek ye first the political kingdom and all else shall be added unto you”*.
  - The substance of people’s political concerns is of a material kind; but development is human.
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## Engels

With these preliminaries in mind we begin our series on Development with the first of two instalments touching on the work of [Frederick Engels](#).

The main one, attached today, is Engels’ own book “[Condition of the Working Class in England](#)”

The next instalment in this part will be an article from a critic of Engels’: Mike Davis. To continue the course, these two will be followed by some modern writings on

urban/rural problems. Then we will go to some of Lenin's writings, including some from the period of the New Economic Policy or "NEP", adopted after the Russian Bolshevik Revolution. After that, the series will proceed to the question of Industrial Development and of large-scale national planning.

It would be hard to exaggerate the historical importance of Engels' work on "the condition of the English working class". It is the founding work of town-planning, yet it was written by an office clerk in his twenties who had no university education. Chance had taken him to Manchester, a place so far ahead of its time in those days that the phrase "*Manchester Capitalism*" was coined to describe its uniqueness, as well as its universal significance.

The CU suggests that comrades page through the attached chapter, although it is long, and read as much of it as is comfortable for them.

Not only did Engels objectify the great industrial towns in literature, systematically, and for the first time; but also, his work laid the empirical and experiential basis, before Engels had fully teamed up with Karl Marx in September 1844, of the conception of the working class as the gravedigger of capitalism and as the leading class in all of humanity and in all of human history. This was at a time when the proletariat was in the most miserable circumstances, as Engels describes. Yet he saw the historic position that they occupied, and their consequent revolutionary potential.

### **The "Industrial Revolution"**

For context: It is said that in terms of the technology applied in the daily life of the masses, the condition of Western Europe by the middle of the Eighteenth Century (i.e. the 1700s) had hardly reached the level of the far more urban Roman Empire that had fallen more than 1200 years earlier, after which Europe sunk into rural-based feudalism, a condition which survived in some parts right up to the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The first three centuries of bourgeois power in Britain had been taken up with cruel overseas adventures. Among them were the Atlantic slave trade, the slave plantations, the competitive trade in the commodities produced there, and the resulting wars. In this period the banking, insurance, shipping and financial services, that were later to serve capitalism, became highly developed.

The Industrial Revolution of the late Eighteenth Century marked the turn away from slavery and towards capitalist wage-slavery, coinciding with the development of the

coal-fired steam power that allowed factories (“mills”) to escape from remote sources of water power and to coagulate in urban density.

## **Manchester**

Manchester was the first of these great industrial cities. Engels arrived there from Germany at the age of 19 in 1839, when Manchester was reaching an urban-industrial maturity that was unique in the world. And Engels saw it for what it was.

Johannesburg was established in Engels’ lifetime, not so very many years after he wrote his description of the then-new “Great Towns” of Britain. Like Manchester, Johannesburg had its productive districts, its more polite commercial, commodity and financial markets, its separate dormitory slums for workers, and its nice suburbs for the bourgeoisie and their hangers-on. Johannesburg is close to the Manchester model.

There are people still alive in Johannesburg today whose grandparents were among the city’s founding inhabitants. It is not difficult to comprehend that only a few generations separate us from the time when overall social conditions had not yet surpassed those of Ancient Rome.

It is not too much to claim, in relation to this work of Engels, that this is where the concept of modernity begins. In this literature, modern urbanism takes shape as an idea.

The picture above is of McConnel & Company’s Mills, Manchester, in about 1820, the year of Frederick Engels’ birth, and also the year of the arrival of the “1820 Settlers” in the Eastern Cape.

- **The above serves to introduce the original reading-text - [Engels’ 1845 “Condition of the Working Class in England”, Chapter 2, The Great Towns.](#)**
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## Planet of Slums?

Today's instalment is Mike Davis' brilliant and celebrated essay, "Planet of Slums", published in 2004 and later made into a book. It is appropriate to have it here, because of its early allusion to Engels' "Condition of the Working Class in England" (*"when the young Engels first ventured onto the mean streets of Manchester"*), and because of Davis's constant references back to what he says were the "predictions" of "classical Marxism".

Davis starts by announcing the fact that at some point between 2004 and now, the world would change forever when, for the first time, the number of human beings living in cities would exceed those remaining in the rural areas.

The world moved from being majority-rural to being majority-urban. It is good that Davis reminds us of this fact. The newspapers probably failed to notice it. Says Davis, in his opening summary:

*"In 1950 there were 86 cities in the world with a population over one million; today there are 400, and by 2015, there will be at least 550. Cities, indeed, have absorbed nearly two-thirds of the global population*

*explosion since 1950 and are currently growing by a million babies and migrants each week. The present urban population (3.2 billion) is larger than the total population of the world in 1960. The global countryside, meanwhile, has reached its maximum population (3.2 billion) and will begin to shrink after 2020. As a result, cities will account for all future world population growth, which is expected to peak at about 10 billion in 2050."*

The cities that soaked up all the people were of different types, according to Davis. Using Marx's and Engels' foundational work as his polemical foil, Davis implies that Engels foretold a future of "Manchester Capitalism", whereas, Davis says, the most massive cities and conurbations of today exhibit features that contradict Engels' and Marx's "predictions".

Davis is trying to argue that the urbanisation that Engels described in his pioneering work, no longer applies. Perhaps he is trying to argue that the class struggle no longer applies, or has been cancelled.

Davis is undoubtedly wrong in this overall argument of his, but he does succeed in producing a stimulating focus on urbanism, and in highlighting a few facts, as he had previously done with his book "City of Quartz", a class-based analysis of town planning in Los Angeles, California, USA.

Here are three Mike Davis quotes. The first two are from this essay:

*"Classical social theory from Marx to Weber, of course, believed that the great cities of the future would follow in the industrializing footsteps of Manchester, Berlin and Chicago."*

*"The global growth of a vast informal proletariat, moreover, is a wholly original structural development unforeseen by either classical Marxism or modernization pundits."*

And the third from a separate [interview](#) (in "Space and Culture"):

*"Neither classical Marxism, nor any other variety of classical social theory or neoliberal economics, ever predicted that such a large fraction of humanity would live in cities and yet basically outside all the formal institutions of the world economy."*

This is actually a literary fraud on Davis' part, because Marx and Engels were never in the prediction business. It is true that they sought to understand the world and



made many observations about it, but “the point is to change it”, as Marx noted in the 11<sup>th</sup> Thesis on Feuerbach.

A conception of the world as developing by itself in a certain direction, without the help of political consciousness and political agency, is something that has always been denounced by “classical” Marxists. Lenin called it “economism”. The inadequacy of “economism” is the reason why the vanguard Party is a necessity.

So Davis is wrong about Marx and the Marxists. Whether he is wrong in other respects is worth examining and debating.

- **The above serves to introduce the original reading-text: Mike Davis’s 2004 [“Planet of Slums”](#)**
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## The Housing Question

Thanks to his book, "[The Condition of the Working Class in England](#)", Frederick Engels is, among many other things, considered to be the father of modern urban studies and town planning.

Therefore one might approach another of his books, "[The Housing Question](#)" (part of it is attached) expecting answers to that same housing question. One might hope for instructions about what to build. One might expect sermons about "delivery", or even model house-plans. Instead, one finds severe polemic about very fundamental issues of class struggle. Why is this?

It may help to first examine what polemic is. Engels begins the attached text with references to his opponent Mulberger, who had complained that Engels had been blunt to the point of rudeness. Engels concedes little more than sarcasm:

*"I am not going to quarrel with friend Mulberger about the 'tone' of my criticism. When one has been so long in the movement as I have, one develops a fairly thick skin against attacks, and therefore one easily presumes also the existence of the same in others. In order to compensate Mulberger I shall try this time to bring my 'tone' into the right relation to the sensitiveness of his epidermis."*

But later, admitting that he had misrepresented Mulberger on a particular (quite small) point, Engels lambastes himself as “irresponsible”.

*“This time Mulberger is really right. I overlooked the passage in question. It was irresponsible of me to overlook it...”*

The rules of polemic are roughly these: It is done in writing. It is always against another named individual’s writing. It is direct and frank and pays little regard to bourgeois squeamishness; on the other hand, it pays the utmost respect to the meaning of the opponent’s words. Opponents in polemic never misrepresent each other. Everything is permissible, except misrepresentation.

### **Development is class struggle**

After his remarks about “Mulberger”, Engels goes straight into a long paragraph (the second half of page 1, going over to page 2) that contains a summary of theory and practice, vanguard and mass, from the 1840s up until his point of writing, just one year after the fall of the Paris Commune. The paragraph mentions “the necessity of the political action of the proletariat and of the **dictatorship of the proletariat** as the transitional stage to the abolition of classes and with them of the state.”

This is the Communist Manifesto all over again. So, we can ask, why does Engels “go to town” to this extent? Is this not merely “housing” we are talking about? Is not housing something that everybody needs? Classless, surely? A win-win situation? Motherhood and apple-pie?

Engels says: NO! Engels says: the class struggle is here.

What we can read in Mulberger, through Engels’ eyes, is the petty-bourgeois (and full bourgeois) greed for this Housing Question as a means, or a tool, for reproducing petty-bourgeois consciousness, and this is just exactly how the post-1994 South African Government started dealing with the housing question. Yes, there should be lots of houses, it said in effect, but they must be petty-bourgeois-style houses, both in physical type, and in form of ownership.

[Pictures: **Shack**, Abahlali BaseMjondolo; **RDP House**, David Goldblatt (“Miriam Mazibuko watering the garden of her new RDP house, Extension 8, Far East Bank, Alexandra Township, Johannesburg, 12 September 2006. It has one room. For lack of space, her four children live with her parents-in-law.”)]



The argument about housing is an argument about the reproduction of capitalism. It is an argument about the continuation of the ascendancy of bourgeois values over those of the working-class. For the bourgeoisie, the creation of a dwelling is an opportunity to invest that house with peasant-like values of individuality, and with petty-bourgeois ideas of “entrepreneurship”, and to regulate and control the people, according to these values.

Everything that happened in “housing” in South Africa post-1994 is pre-figured in the banal prescriptions of Mulberger that Engels lambastes. Any critique of housing in South Africa will inevitably have to follow the example of Engels if it is to be of any use. Please, comrades, read the first pages and the last paragraphs of this document, if you cannot read all of it.

As the **Communist Manifesto** says, the history of all hitherto-existing societies has been a history of class struggle. The coming “development” period of South African history will also be a period of class struggle. We may not necessarily win every specific struggle. But what this text of Engels says is: let us never fool ourselves. Win or lose, we are in a class struggle, and there is no neutral ground, least of all on the question of housing and land development. There is much more to be studied here, but the key is political.

- The above serves to introduce the original reading-text: [The Housing Question, 1872, Part Three, Frederick Engels.](#)



## Reactionary Petty-Bourgeois Utopia

To understand the controversies of the present day intelligently (to borrow a phrase from the attached text), one needs to go back. We went back to Engels' 1872 book on "The Housing Question". Today we go back to Lenin, in 1905.

Lenin's "[Petty Bourgeois and Proletarian Socialism](#)" is an example of the antipathy of both these writers towards "reactionary petty-bourgeois utopia". Both Engels and Lenin opposed the liberal view of emancipation, whereby the worker's household is re-constituted as a miniature image of the bourgeois household.

The relevance of it is also to the concept of "development", a word that is not used in Lenin's article, by the way. But clearly, Lenin is looking at a situation wherein "development" in our modern, vulgar sense is very much on the agenda, i.e.: The masses are poor. Something must be done.

Lenin points out the class realities:

*"Will the fullest liberty and expropriation of the landlords do away with commodity production? No, it will not."*

*“...after destroying the power of the bureaucracy and the landlords, it will set up a democratic system of society, without, however, altering the bourgeois foundation of that democratic society, without abolishing the rule of capital.”*

Lenin, already in 1905, 15 years before he launched the concept of the National Democratic Revolution in the report-back of the Commission on the National and Colonial Question to the Second Congress of the Communist international in 1920, had fully grasped the necessity of such an NDR and its close relationship to the trajectory of social development in its full, dialectical sense. He writes:

*“Can a class-conscious worker forget the democratic struggle for the sake of the socialist struggle, or forget the latter for the sake of the former? No, a class-conscious worker calls himself a Social-Democrat for the reason that he understands the relation between the two struggles. He knows that there is no other road to socialism save the road through democracy, through political liberty.”*

But Lenin refuses to allow the revolution to ossify into any sort of equivalent to the idea of a static, perpetual “National Democratic Society”. He says:

*“The peasants' struggle against the landlords is now a revolutionary struggle; the confiscation of the landlords' estates at the present stage of economic and political evolution is revolutionary in every respect, and we back this revolutionary-democratic measure. However, to call this measure "socialisation", and to deceive oneself and the people concerning the possibility of "equality" in land tenure under the system of commodity production, is a **reactionary petty-bourgeois utopia**, which we leave to the socialist-reactionaries.”*

What is a reactionary petty-bourgeois utopia? The illustration above, a German Nazi poster dating from about 25 years after Lenin wrote the linked article, implies a reconstruction and development programme that is purely utilitarian and even innocent. The progress that it offers appear to offer the static end of progress. It is the kind of thing that Paulo Freire referred to as “necrophilia”.

Please download the document, read it and appreciate the extraordinary clarity and foresight that Lenin was able to achieve, aged 35, in 1905, and how much of it rings true, today.

- The above serves to introduce the original reading-text: [Petty-bourgeois and Proletarian Socialism, 1905, Lenin.](#)





## Local Class Alliance

The politics of class alliance are well understood and well executed at national level in South Africa in terms of the **National Democratic Revolution** (NDR) policy developed during the last nine decades, which led directly to the democratic breakthrough of 1994.

The NDR remains the dominant framework of South African politics, having been refreshed at Polokwane in 2007. At national level, the interests of the working class continue to be well articulated through the South African Communist Party (SACP) and the trade union movement whose largest centre is COSATU.

The petty bourgeoisie and peasantry, on the other hand, have weak political expression at national level, in the form of SANCO. This is a consequence of the “sack-of-potatoes” nature of both of these two classes: the rural petty-bourgeois who are the peasants; and the urban peasants, who are the petty-bourgeoisie.

Both these classes are made up of individualists who aspire to live autonomously as families, with everything of their own. The working class is compelled to represent the interests of these mostly extremely poor sections of the population at national level. Otherwise, the established big bourgeoisie would quickly exploit the poorer ones as political foot-soldiers for capitalism, or possibly for demagogic fascism.

The monopolists also, in practice, exploit the peasants and the petty bourgeois directly, feeding off their younger brothers and sisters in the predatory way which Rosa Luxemburg described so well in Chapter 2 of “[Reform or Revolution?](#)” from which our main text (attached) is taken.

### **Local class politics**

But at local level, in South Africa, the situation of the working-class vis-à-vis the petty-bourgeoisie and peasantry is reversed. The organised working class has hardly any formal presence either at electoral ward level (where ANC branches are organised), or at voting district level. Here, the petty-bourgeois individualists are working on their home ground and at the scale of their own business operations. COSATU Locals and Socialist Forums are in the shade, if they exist at all.

The SACP generates cadres, and organises and assists the masses, including the ANC, in many different ways, but it has not stood candidates in elections for many years. Whether its electoral practice changes, or not, the SACP is supposed to make a major impact at local level when the entire party is re-organised into Voting-District-based branches.

### **Advantage reversed at local level**

In terms of theory, there is relatively little that would serve as ideological guidance to the working class on the topic of local development, whereas the petty-bourgeoisie has an abundance of material and history to lean on, some of which we will unpack in more detail during this part of our course.

The town is the birthplace of the bourgeoisie and it is the natural territory of the petty-bourgeoisie. The municipality is the “executive committee” of the local bourgeoisie. Not only is it their instrument, but it is their regenerator, whose job it is to reproduce bourgeois relations at local level and to bring forth new generations of bourgeois-minded councillors and bureaucrats.

### **Organs of People’s Power**

In the past, one effective working-class tactic was to confront this concentration of local bourgeois strength with an organised democratic power such as, in South Africa, what were known as “Civics”. In Russia, long before the revolutions of 1917, this movement took the form of “soviets”. The first one, as [Vladimir Shubin](#) relates, was set up in the textile manufacturing centre of [Ivanovo](#) in 1905. Another tactic, problematic though it has been, is the setting up of producer and consumer co-

operatives. This series will attempt to develop both of these perspectives in due course.

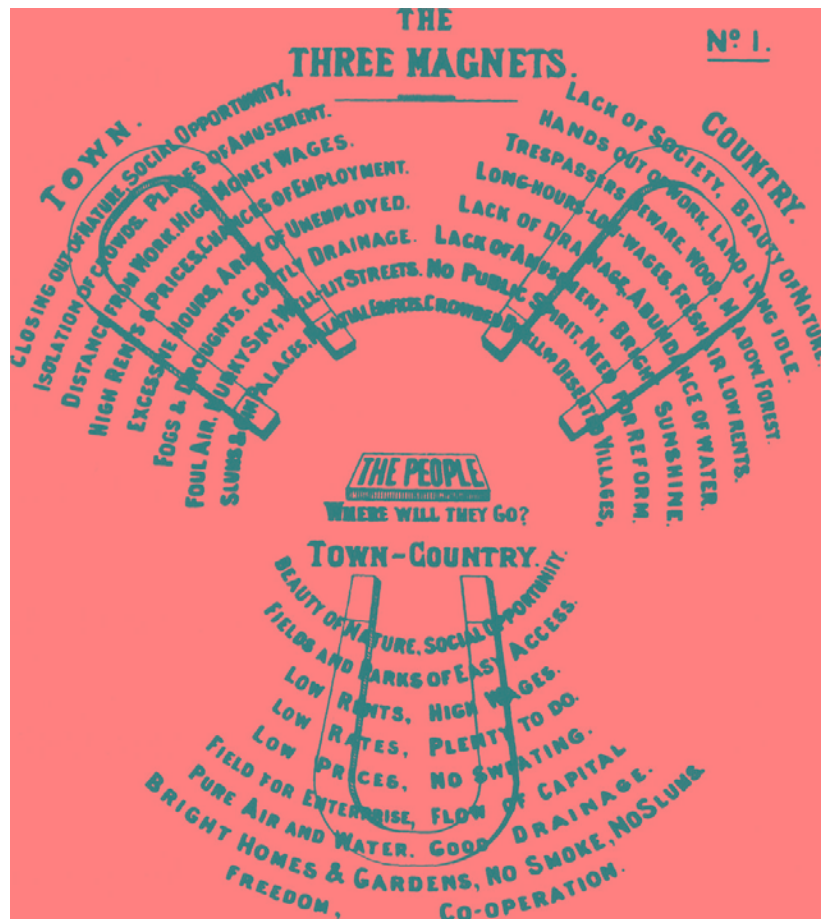
In this part, our CU job is to review some of the debate in the literature of petty-bourgeois development. It is not the aim of the working-class to drive any other class to premature extinction. In the “[18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte](#)” Karl Marx described the peasantry, with sympathy, as a “sack of potatoes”, because they could not unite at national level. In the spirit of this work, the working class must unite the weaker classes and lead them, and make provision for them in terms that will satisfy them.

For the classic peasantry, this meant giving them land and a market for their produce. For the petty bourgeoisie, it is the freedom to do business, and the guarantee, in the face of the predatory monopolists, of a market. As much as they need us, so also do we, as the proletariat, need these classes as allies against the monopoly bourgeoisie. Therefore, as partisans of the working class, we should read these works with a serious interest.

How will things change? The communists must strive to reproduce, in every locality, the same well-expressed and solid class alliance which has up to now underpinned the NDR at the national level. This means providing for both the petty-bourgeoisie/peasantry, and for the working class. These classes must be able to see a clear way forward, in alliance with each other, at local level, where, at present, it is working-class organisation that is lacking.

Illustration: The hammer-and-sickle emblem of the communists represents the **alliance of workers and peasants**.

- The above is to introduce the original reading-text: [Reform or Revolution?, Chapters 2, 7, 9 and 10, Luxemburg](#).



## Housing by People

[Housing by People](#) (excerpts attached), by John Charlewood Turner, is a discussion of housing, from a well-educated point of view, as well as a discussion of where decisive power should lie, who should act, and how all of these responsibilities should be divided up.

Turner's book can serve us as a small link to the great, beautiful and necessary field of study called urbanism, of which very little emerges into the general public realm. Urbanism is a site of ideological struggle. It is also a labyrinth, in which it is easy to get lost. Turner, as you will see, refers to "*the mirage of development*"; meaning the *illusion* of development.

Turner's focus in the two chapters that are given here is on autonomy versus heteronomy, and on proscription versus prescription. In short, he is in favour of Power to the People.

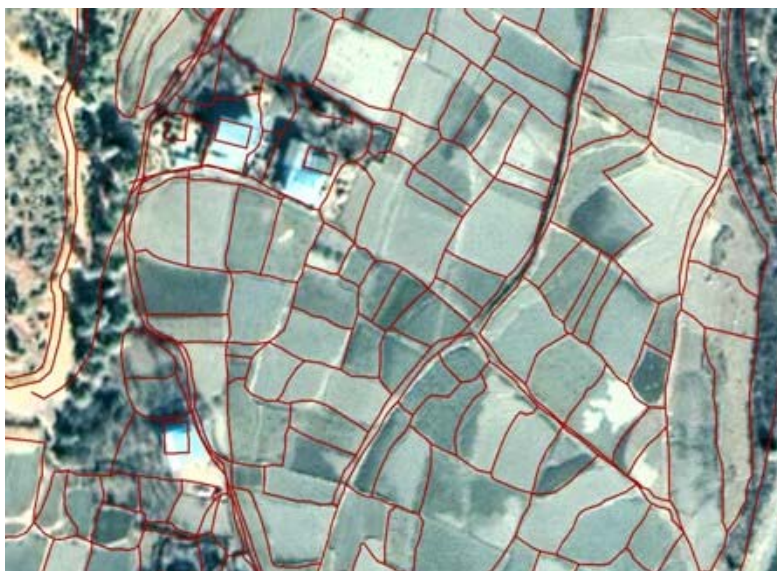
Turner is undoubtedly a partisan of the poor petty-bourgeoisie, and is a very clear-minded student of, and exponent of, their needs.

For the partisans of the working class, Turner's guidelines are therefore invaluable. They provide insight into the world of a class that is quite different from the proletariat. The two classes are very close in time and space, even as close as to be co-existent in the same biological families; yet their needs and outlooks are different.

Predecessors to Turner in this urban-studies tradition have been [Patrick Geddes](#), [Lewis Mumford](#), and [Ebenezer Howard](#).

The illustration shows Howard's famous diagram "The Three Magnets", from his 1902 book "Garden Cities of To-morrow".

- The above is to introduce the original reading-text: [Housing by People, C1, C6, Who Decides?, John Turner](#).
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## A bridge for the poor?

“Barking dogs and building bridges” (attached, and linked below) is Lauren Royston’s subtle and patient demolition of the simplistic bourgeois platitudes of Hernando de Soto.

De Soto is a Peruvian and the author of a book called “The Mystery of Capital” published in 2000. He subsequently visited South Africa. De Soto advocates globalised capitalism, and claims to have found a way of incorporating the poorest of the poor within a regulated, universal framework of property and economic practice.

Royston does not take a heavy axe to de Soto but recognises that he had achieved a remarkable propaganda success (quickly forgotten, but occasionally, as in the 2014 general elections in South Africa, revived) in a field where academics like herself and the advocacy groups “Leap” and “Afra”, among many others, had found themselves being ignored for years, and even decades. Though they may have disliked de Soto’s ideology, yet they were in some measure happy that de Soto had secured wide publicity for the “extra-legal” (i.e. outside the law) arrangements by which poor people are in practice obliged to manage their lives.

Royston’s scholarship takes us from Grahamstown, 1850, via the Glen Grey Act and parts of KZN to Cosmo City, Phola Park and Thokoza, and to a firm understanding of the enduring empirical condition of South Africa’s petty-bourgeois and peasant poor (who happen to be allies of the working class in the National Democratic Revolution).



## **Who are our allies?**

In terms of this course on Development, this part's several texts (and there is a fourth one to come) are intended to open us to a much more detailed, and a much less vague, understanding of our class allies.

The petty-bourgeoisie and the peasants are not “progressive”. Unlike the proletariat, they do not have a glorious future ahead of them. On the other hand, they are not simply “Trojan horses” for the big bourgeoisie, but are severely oppressed in the present system. The big bourgeoisie feeds off the small bourgeoisie in many ways, as Rosa Luxemburg could see. Even so, the petty-bourgeoisie and the peasantry share one great characteristic with the big bourgeoisie: they seek private wealth and property. The picture contains contradictions, and therefore it requires careful study.

The petty-bourgeoisie and the peasantry are the soil from which the big bourgeoisie (the large-scale proprietors, the bankers, and the capitalist employers of thousands) have sprung. They are also the soil from which the proletariat has sprung, but in the case of the latter, only because of utter dispossession – complete absence of productive property – enforced by the actions of the predatory big bourgeoisie.

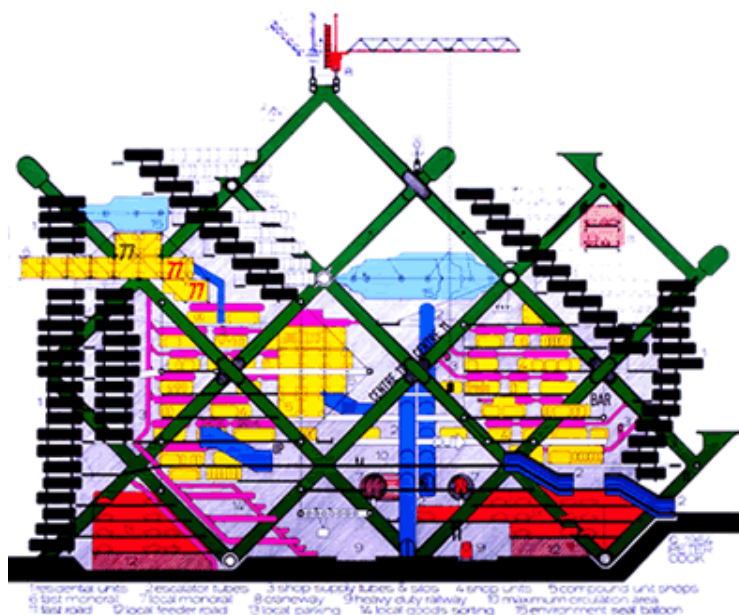
Looking at these classes very specifically, and with evidence of their nature in front of us, it becomes clear why, within the National Democratic Revolution, the proletariat is allied with the peasantry and/or the petty-bourgeoisie. They must be with us, and not with our opponents, against us.

Once again it becomes clear that development is class struggle. What can happen, and what does or does not happen, is determined by the competing class interests within the overall political economy of the country, as Lauren Royston points out in the attached text.

**Postscript:** In the 2014 national elections in South Africa, Hernando de Soto's quack remedies were once more rolled out, this time by the DA, and criticised in turn by the SACP's 1<sup>st</sup> Deputy General Secretary, Cde Jeremy Cronin, in Umsebenzi Online, Volume 13, Number 16 ([click here](#) to read the article).

**Image:** Cadastral overlay on a satellite image from an Internet site describing a recent first-time property survey of Bhutan, the world's last remaining feudal state. Presumably this survey was done so as to assist the encroachment of banking and capitalistic property relations in that country.

- **The above is to introduce the original reading-text: [Barking dogs, building bridges, Lauren Royston](#).**



## Design is Politics

Glen Mills' excellent, short, 2006 Business Day article "Thinking out of the matchbox" (attached, and linked below) briefly summarised the general situation in South African housing at that time.

There is still no public discussion of design, except at the "Top Billing" level of snobbery and eclecticism, or otherwise at the level of the most banal and hopeless utilitarianism. Mills' article brings out this vital question of design. His argument is true, and tragic.

Design is the politics and the propaganda of the eye, and the enabler of freedom. It is the politics that is lived in, as opposed to being merely read or spoken. Design is terribly impoverished in South Africa. This part of our politics has been neglected.

On 30 January 2012, Glen Mills published another article in Business Day, under the headline "Informal settlements could be our cities of the future". It has been added to our discussion document.

In the next part, we look at the rural side of things.

Image: "[Plug-In City](#)"

- The above is to introduce the original reading-text: [Thinking out of the matchbox, Glen Mills, Business Day](#).



## La Via Campesina

The main attached documents (and linked downloads below), are from a farmer called Rob Sacco. Together they comprise 2005 letter from the bundu in reply to an e-mail that was printed by a friend and carried up to Sacco in the Eastern Highlands of Zimbabwe.

Sacco is a defender of the people's history of Zimbabwe as he sees it. He seems suspicious of nearly everyone else, but he is articulate and serious, and obviously a practical person. He writes of "development by marginal adjustment", which sounds right, for peasants.

La Via Campesina means "the way of the peasant".

While taking a swipe at the SACP for being "workerist" (which is certainly a bad mistake, but how would he know?) Sacco lays out his assessment:

*"...the transfer of 10 million hectares plus of the best land from a post-colonial class perpetually externalizing wealth, to the mass of an African peasant class, and to an African petty bourgeoisie, generating indigenous wealth from the ground up, constitutes a genuine revolution."*

Sacco is not shy to defend the peasantry and the petty bourgeoisie. This is an example the Communist University needs for our current purposes. We need an advocate for the interests of the other masses, the ones that the working class needs as allies, so as to form an overwhelming popular majority, together.

If we are to be allies, we must be capable of understanding peasants and petty bourgeois in their own terms, and we must be able to learn from them.

Sacco has a sense of place and a pride in his ability to bring forth nourishment for people from the land, by work and by skill and by knowledge and experience.

There is a lot of personal history in this piece, and a lot of political history of structures and institutions, and even a cat that breaks a bottle of whisky. This is all quite typical of the peasant approach to life, which is always as much of a narrative as it is a collective.

The picture is of farmers in Mozambique.

- The above is to introduce the original reading-text: [Peasant Revolution in Zimbabwe, Rob Sacco, 2005, reply to Bond.](#)
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Poster, "Do you help to liquidate illiteracy?" (USSR, 1925)

## Education, key to development

Lenin's short, 1920 speech to adult educators (**attached**) starts with some paragraphs about the war situation. This was a little more than two years after the Great October 1917 Russian Revolution, and in the mean time there had been counter-revolutionary uprisings and military interventions from the capitalist powers, including Great Britain. These can serve to remind us what an enormous effort had to be made just to obtain sufficient peace to start building the USSR.

In the remaining page or so of this typically powerful summing-up by Lenin can be read his view of the relationship between education, development of industrial

productive forces (including electrification), and the emancipation of the peasants from poverty and backward material conditions.

Says Lenin:

*[We] "...will go to the peasants with a practical, businesslike and clear-cut plan for the reconstruction of all industry and will demonstrate that with education at its present level the peasant and the worker will not be able to carry out this task and will not escape from filth, poverty, typhus and disease.*

*"This practical task is clearly connected with cultural and educational improvements and must serve as the central point around which we must group all our Party propaganda and activities, all our school and extra-mural teaching.*

*"This will help to get a sound grasp of the most urgent interests of the peasant masses and will **link up the general improvement in culture and knowledge with burning economic requirements** to such an extent that we shall increase a hundredfold the demand of the working-class masses for education."*

We, too, must link up the general improvement in culture and knowledge with burning economic requirements. This is the reason for our studies.

- The above is to introduce the original reading-text: [Speech to Adult Educationalists at 3rd All-Russian Conference, 1920, Lenin.](#)
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## China 2013

Samir Amin is an African revolutionary writer who has recently written comparatively as between the development path of post-revolutionary China, and that of the Soviet Union.

On page 2 of our 20-page bookletised version of his article (“China 2013”, attached), Samir Amin writes that the success of China (and Vietnam) “is the product of an intelligent and exceptional political line implemented by the Communist Parties of these two countries.”

South Africa’s problems are far from being identical to those of China’s at any stage of its development, or to those of the Soviet Union.

It would seem to follow, therefore, that South Africa will also require its own, and different, “intelligent and exceptional political line”.

This does not mean that South Africa can ignore the experience of others such as the Soviet Union, China and Vietnam. On the contrary, it means that South Africans need to study as widely as possible the paths of development that others have followed. Not so as to copy them, but so as to get behind them to the general principles of planning and development.

In particular, we may note that China, the Soviet Union, and India, have all used the practice of five-year planning as well as longer-term strategic orientation.

South Africa, at last, has begun to plan. We have our first, imperfect but nevertheless actually-existing, plan, called the NDP (National Development Plan).

This very extraordinary article of Samir Amin's can help us to reflect on planning and on the results that it can have, even in so short a historical period as one person's lifetime.

- **The above is to introduce the original reading-text: [China 2013, Samir Amin](#).**
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## Co-Operatives or Protégés?

The classic revolutionary literature on co-operatives divides into two parts, characterised **first** by Marx's, Engels' and Lenin's disdain for co-ops under the bourgeois dictatorship, and **second** by Lenin's embracing of co-ops as the sufficient and necessary means, under proletarian rule, of uniting the town and the country and of effecting a transition, for the proletarian and non-proletarian masses together, into socialism.

For South Africans this poses theoretical problems.

We cannot just ignore what the classics say about co-ops under capitalism, not because they are "classics", but because the arguments are strong, and because ours is still a bourgeois state. Therefore the arguments that Marx makes in "The Critique of the Gotha Programme" (attached, and downloadable via the link below), for example, still apply to us.

Yet we appear to need the opportunity, that co-ops seem to provide, of socialising fragmented and incomplete individual efforts, or in other words of organising the unorganised peasantry, petty-bourgeoisie, and more generally, those whom capitalism has failed to employ.

In the light of these considerations, let us look at some of what Karl Marx said about co-operatives on pages 4, 5, 6 and 9 of “The Critique of the Gotha Programme”. Most of it is scathing. The best that Marx can manage to say for co-ops is:

*“That the workers desire to establish the conditions for co-operative production on a social scale, and first of all on a national scale, in their own country, only means that they are working to revolutionize the present conditions of production, and it has nothing in common with the foundation of co-operative societies with state aid. But as far as the present co-operative societies are concerned, they are of value only insofar as they are the independent creations of the workers and not protégés either of the governments or of the bourgeois.”*

Prior to the above he remarks (about the Gotha Programme):

*“Vulgar socialism (and from it in turn a section of the democrats) has taken over from the bourgeois economists the consideration and treatment of distribution as independent of the mode of production and hence the presentation of socialism as turning principally on distribution.”*

The co-operation that is patronised by the state, and also state distribution (i.e. what we now call “delivery”) is only “vulgar socialism”, says Marx.

The Critique of the Gotha Programme is not a long document (though it is very rich). Please try to read it, and re-read it from time to time. It is invaluable for many purposes, and not just for this question of co-ops.

**Illustration:** Sewing Co-operative, Rwanda, 2009

- The above is to introduce the original reading-texts: [Critique of the Gotha Programme, Marx.](#)
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## Lenin: Co-ops work under the working class

The main item today is Lenin's "On Co-operation", a short but very rich and extraordinary document written in January 1923. Lenin suffered his third and last stroke in March of that year, from which he did not recover, dying in January, 1924. This short text is therefore among his last works.

Writing in post-revolutionary conditions, Lenin briefly acknowledges the criticism that had been heaped upon co-ops under the bourgeois dictatorship: *"There is a lot of fantasy in the dreams of the old co-operators. Often they are ridiculously fantastic,"* he says.

Following which he proceeds to place an extremely high value on co-operatives, in the new conditions, as being almost the most important component of the advance to full socialism, saying:

*"since political power is in the hands of the working-class, since this political power owns all the means of production, the only task, indeed, that remains for us is to organize the population in co-operative societies."*

We can note that in this article Lenin anticipates at least one or two decades of further life of the New Economic Policy (NEP), which allowed bourgeois activity under proletarian state power.

What actually happened was that within about four years after Lenin's death the NEP had been reversed and the policy of the Soviet Union had become one of large-scale five-year plans, only. The centralisation of the economy, started under Lenin as complementary to the NEP, had in effect become treated as an either/or mutually exclusive alternative to it.

Is this a necessary dichotomy? In South Africa, we will at some stage have to decide. So far, since the democratic breakthrough of 1994, South African governments have encouraged all kinds of employment, and small business development, including encouragement of co-operatives that has been rather nominal. In that context, note what Lenin says about the NEP: that it made the mistake of neglecting co-operatives.

This short article of Lenin's on co-operation ranges more widely than simply on co-ops as such. Particularly interesting are the concluding paragraphs of Part 2 of the document, where Lenin refers to a "cultural revolution".

In the penultimate paragraph of Part 1, Lenin had written:

*"By ability to be a trader I mean the ability to be a cultured trader. Let those Russians, or peasants, who imagine that since they trade they are good traders, get that well into their heads. This does not follow that all. They do trade, but that is far from being cultured traders. They now trade in an Asiatic manner, but to be a good trader one must trade in the European manner. They are a whole epoch behind in that."*

The difference that Lenin refers to as between "Asiatic" and "European" trading is the difference between production for sale without having secured a market, and on the other hand, production for a known market, or for a previously-identified demand. We will pursue this question in relation to the next item, on "entrepreneurship".

In Part 2, Lenin re-states the difference between pre- and post-revolutionary co-ops, saying:

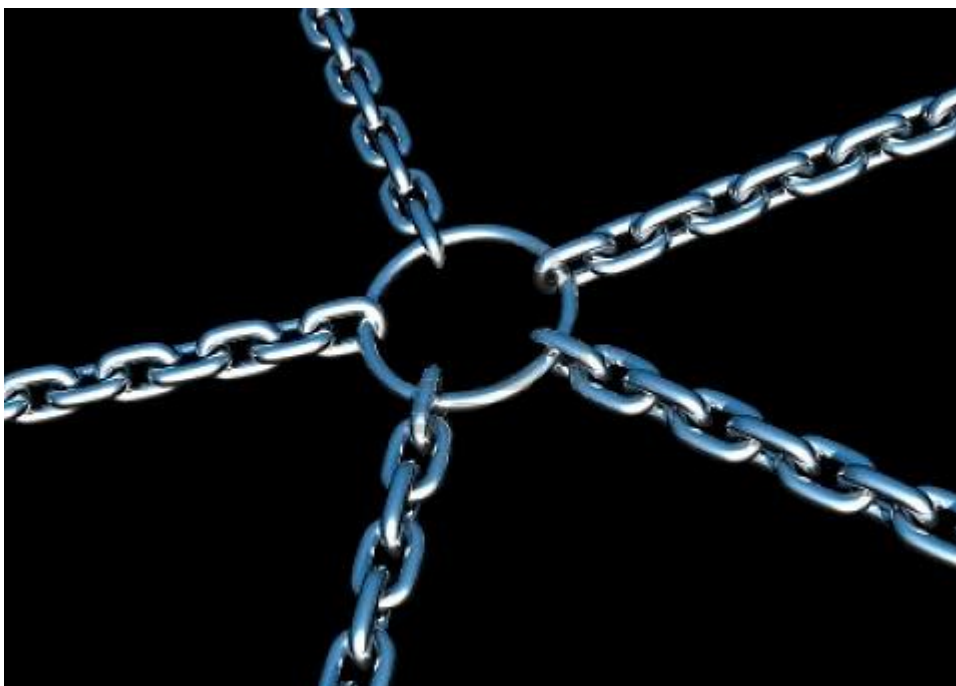
*"...we are right in regarding as entirely fantastic this 'co-operative' socialism, and as romantic, and even banal, the dream of transforming class enemies into class collaborators and class war into class peace (so-called class truce) by merely organizing the population in cooperative societies."*

*"...But see how things have changed now that the political power is in the hands of the working-class, now that the political power of the exploiters is overthrown..."*

**Illustration:** Selling Surplus Grain Crops at the Office of the People's Co-operative, Wang Qi, People's Republic of China, 1953

- The above is to introduce the original reading-texts: [On Co-operation, Lenin](#).





## Entrepreneurship

In the [Umsebenzi Online of 30 June 2010](#), SACP GS Dr Blade Nzimande wrote that we must **“Fight Tenderpreneurs to defend entrepreneurship!!”**

The GS wrote: *“Entrepreneurs, found in co-operatives, small and medium sized businesses, are all those who genuinely and honestly go about doing business, including tendering for government work.”*

The **attached** item today is a short article of Professor Michael Morris’s, published in 1996 in the Business Day, which debunked a number of misconceptions about so-called “entrepreneurship”.

Morris wrote, among other things, that: *“The entrepreneurial individual recognises a trend, a possibility, an unmet demand. He or she comes up with a concept for capitalising on the trend or demand and does so while the window of opportunity is open.”*

This is the same “cultured trader” point as Lenin is making. Lenin knew that the setting up of producer co-operatives without attention to their markets would be a disastrous waste.

Morris also says: *“Entrepreneurial individuals are opportunity-driven, not resource-driven.”* This may be the truest of the many true things that Morris noticed about entrepreneurs.

Business is driven by the customer. It is not true, as Jean-Baptiste Say used to believe, that supply creates its own demand. The entrepreneur’s job is to identify demand, where demand means people wanting goods or services, and ready and willing to pay for them promptly, and at a price that will ensure a profit to the entrepreneur.

Most co-ops in South Africa are set up in what Lenin referred to as the “Asiatic manner”, expecting to produce first and sell later. Whereas, as Lenin pointed out, to be a good co-operator one must be what he called a “cultured trader”. Above all, this means securing the demand before you make (or buy) and supply. The entrepreneur is a trader, and a cultured trader.

A great deal follows from that, and these are the considerations that define the world around the co-operatives, small and medium sized businesses that Dr Blade Nzimande referred to. Most of these considerations are obscured or downright lied-about in capitalist literature. Morris’s short article is a rare example of relative candour in the business press, which makes it very well worth reading.

The market is crucial, but contrary to what the bourgeois ideologues keep on saying, the market is not free or open. It is we, the opponents of monopoly capitalism, who are the true “free-marketeers”. Small businesses, including co-ops, to survive, must have access to markets that are not dominated by predatory monopolistic market manipulators; and if they are selling to the state, they must be paid on time and in full. These conditions hardly exist in South Africa, which has historically been monopolistic in the extreme, and whose government, on the other hand, is a notoriously slow payer.

The Chinese delegation that visited South Africa in 2009 told us that the Chinese peasants are guaranteed a market by the state, at the same price that private buyers are prepared to pay.

South Africa will also have to pay attention to the question of the market for peasant, petty-bourgeois, and co-operative production, which is so clear in Lenin’s approach and which he explicitly recommends.

Even if it may not always be a matter of the state setting up co-ops, yet the mass social development of peasants and petty-bourgeois is always going to be a matter

of educating, organising, and mobilising. Paradoxically, and for this reason, the petty-bourgeoisie needs the communists.

**Illustration:** “Entrepreneur” means one who “holds together”, as the ring in the picture holds together the chains. Most especially, the business entrepreneur holds together demand and supply.

- The above is to introduce the original reading-texts: [Dismissing Myths and Misunderstandings of Entrepreneurship, Morris](#).
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Course: Development, Rural and Urban

**13001, Development, Rural and Urban, Introductions, Booklet 1 of 2**

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